

HEALTHY FORESTS RESTORATION ACT

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, last Thursday the Senate passed H.R. 1904, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. I voted for the bill because I believe we need to take action to bring our forests back to good health, and there are some good provisions in the Senate-passed version of the bill. For example, the Senate version allows communities to provide recommendations on reducing the threat of unnaturally intense catastrophic wildfire in community wildfire protection plans.

In addition, two amendments that I offered were adopted by the Senate. The first amendment requires collaborative monitoring of the social and ecological effects of projects. Without this requirement, we will never be able to rebuild trust between rural communities and the agencies. The second amendment encourages the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to hire local contractors for forest thinning projects in order to create jobs in forest-dependent communities.

Even so, I continue to believe there are serious problems with this legislation. Most significantly, the bill fails to tackle the main obstacle constraining the Forest Service from improving forest health which is the agency's harmful policy of borrowing from proactive forest restoration accounts to pay for firefighting. Some of the other major issues raised by the Senate language include a lack of any new funding to reduce hazardous fuels; curtailing public participation in the management of public lands, including the establishment of a new so-called "pre-decisional" review process; and lack of protection for National Monuments, roadless areas and other environmentally sensitive areas.

I tried to fix these problems by offering and cosponsoring amendments, including one to give the Forest Service new authority to borrow funds directly from the Treasury when firefighting costs exceed available funds. Unfortunately, this amendment did not prevail. However, Senator BURNS, Senator NICKLES, and others offered to work with me to seek solutions to the "fire borrowing" problem. I accept their gracious offer and look forward to addressing this issue in the future with their cooperation and assistance.

Other amendments that were offered by myself and others to improve the bill were defeated. Nonetheless, I voted for final passage of H.R. 1904 because the Senate version was an improvement as compared to the one passed by the House earlier this year.

FOREIGN OPERATIONS EXPORT FINANCING, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

WATER MISSIONS' HONDURAS WATER SUPPLY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Mr. GRAHAM of South Carolina. Mr. President I rise to ask the bill's man-

ager, Senator MCCONNELL, about a provision in the Fiscal Year 2004 foreign operations bill of particular importance to me. This appropriations bill provides \$100 million for water conservation, \$1.5 million of which the committee report sets aside for Water Missions International for its safe water supply and wastewater treatment projects for several regional hospitals in Honduras. Water Missions is a faith-based South Carolina organization that delivers potable water engineering systems to towns and villages in developing countries around the world. I ask Senator MCCONNELL if he is familiar with Water Missions International and this important demonstration project.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Yes, I am familiar with Water Missions International and its work to provide water to communities in developing countries. I am particularly familiar with their current water project in a regional hospital in Honduras. I recently met with Water Missions' founders, George and Molly Greene, to discuss this important project and was impressed by Water Missions International's use of low-cost, appropriate technology for improving drinking water supplies.

Mr. GRAHAM of South Carolina. If I may raise one more issue, I am concerned that United States Agency for International Development, USAID, has at times not followed report recommendations made by the Senate and House Appropriations Committees. Is it the manager's intention that USAID follow the recommendation in the report?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Absolutely. I strongly support the report language that was included in Omnibus Appropriations Bill earlier this year, saying that "the managers expect the Department of State and USAID to follow the recommendations in the House and Senate reports, unless those recommendations are modified in the statement of the managers." I am pleased that senior USAID officials recently met with Water Missions to begin the partnership process in implementing this particular recommendation.

Mr. GRAHAM of South Carolina. I thank Senator MCCONNELL for his support of Water Missions and its inclusion as an USAID project.

AMENDMENTS TO VARIOUS REGULATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I would like to give notice to Members and staff of the Senate that the Committee on Rules and Administration has approved amendments to six committee regulations. Pursuant to Title V of the Rules of Procedure for the Committee on Rules and Administration, and having provided advance notice of our intention to approve the following amendments to the regulations attached hereto, we hereby approve said

amendments effective November 1, 2003, except for amendments to the regulations governing furniture, accessories and special allowances policy which shall be effective January 3, 2005.

I. The following regulations are approved as amended:

A. Committee Regulations Governing the Payment of Funeral Expenses of Deceased Members, as amended, by adding, deleting and substituting as follows:

Delete the last sentence in the first paragraph and substitute—"Such arrangements may include ordinary and necessary expenses for the following:"

Add the following after item 4—"floral expenses themselves are personal in nature and are not considered an official expense, with the exception of one floral arrangement from the United States Senate);"

Delete the word "Service" and substitute the word "Reasonable" at the beginning of item 6, and insert the words "use of a" after the word "for" and before the word "church". Also insert the word "other" after the word "or" and before the word "place".

Substitute "\$5,000" for "\$2,000" for casket expense in item 9.

Substitute "\$2,000" for "\$1,000" for burial plot in item 10.

Add the following as item 11—"Miscellaneous expenses directly related to the funeral (e.g., fee for minister and musician) and not personal in nature (e.g., food, flowers, cards), not to exceed \$2,500 in the aggregate."

Add the following as item 12—"Any request for exceptions to this list must be made to the Sergeant at Arms, and approved by the Committee on Rules and Administration."

A copy of the Committee Regulations governing funeral expenses for deceased Members, as amended, is included as Attachment A. These amended regulations shall be effective as of November 1, 2003.

B. Committee Regulations Governing Advance Payment, as amended, by adding new sections (l) and (m) as follows:

"(l) Metro subsidy, one week in advance of the new month"

"(m) Pre-paid cellular and telephone communications"

A copy of the Committee Regulations governing advance payment, as amended, is included as Attachment B. These amended regulations shall be effective as of November 1, 2003.

C. Committee Regulations Governing Furniture, Accessories and Special Allowances Policy for Senate Office Buildings, as amended, by substituting as follows:

Substitute "\$5,000" for "\$2,500" under Operational Policy for Senators' Special Furniture and Accessory Allowance.

A copy of the Committee Regulations governing furniture, accessories and special allowances policy, as amended, is included as Attachment C. These amended regulations shall be effective as of January 3, 2005.

D. Committee Regulations Governing Payments and Reimbursements From